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Architecture.

SCOTT AND PALMERSTON.

"De gustibus non est disputandum."

MORE artistic iniquities have been bolstered up by the perverse application of the above proverb, than by any other fallacious reasoning whatever. Let us examine into the matter, by way of a simile. Brown, the grocer, an old bachelor, by no means an Adonis, near sighted, and rather imperfectly developed in mind and body, suddenly falls in love with Sally Ann Jones, a spinster of many summers, inclining to *embonpoint*, rather short than slender, with a decided pug nose, low forehead, small, dark eyes, heavy eyebrows, a somewhat shortened chin, for which nature seems to offer extra compensation in a second and enlarged edition of this same commodity. She wears ringlets, low-necked dresses, and persists in exhibiting her bare arms, consoling herself with the delusion, that lily white can successfully supersede nature's red, when assisted by a flimsy fabric of Brussels lace. Now, Brown maintains that Sally Ann is a *perfect beauty*. Apply the proverb to this case, and it will be admitted by every thinking person, that it means no more than this: that Brown cannot, in spite of his perverted taste, be indicted by a grand jury and arraigned before a court, and sent to the state prison for such a transgression. No one who lays claim to common sense will argue that the opinion of Brown, hoisted upon the stilts of the proverb at the head of this article, constitutes Sally Ann the acknowledged belle of New York. Quite the contrary. Every one who hears of Brown's infatuation, shrugs his shoulders and exclaims in good English, "There is no accounting for tastes." It is very often the case, however, that society pays the tribute of a sacrifice, by denying its own individuality and good sense in deference to the opinion of personages in high position. For instance: the Empress Eugénie, to conceal a certain maternal change of *taille*, assumes the obsolete crinoline, not because it is beautiful, but because it answers a temporary purpose. The consequence is, that English dowagers, who ought to be beyond the suspicion of similar conditions (and who, in deference to British morality be it said, are not so suspected by ourselves), assume the doubtful garb, and convert themselves into walking busts on pedestals, for all the world more like beer barrels than the human form divine—and all Greek models of beauty to the contrary, notwithstanding! Let a growling critic raise the objection that crinoline is a fashion belonging to another and morally corrupt period of society, entirely inapplicable to this present civilized age, and he will be put down instantly as a radical, a monster, and a man of no taste.

Is there no tribunal, then, which decides what is or is not really beautiful? do we live in a time of æsthetic feudality, where every man fortifies himself in his own castle of the Ideal, with the simple proverb that "There is no disputing about tastes?" Every candid man of education will admit that this is not the case. Nor need we submit to the opinion of a majority, for it is well known that the beautiful has ever been cherished by only a small minority of educated and refined minds, who are appreciative and brave enough to separate the chaff from the wheat, and follow the dictates of their own minds rather than that of fashion. Lord Palmerston, who happened to have befriended Louis Napoleon while an exile in England, has been in return patted on the shoulder by that successful *empereur*. Lord Palmerston loves to be the friend of an emperor. Who

can blame him? If he should, one fine morning, appear in the house of lords with a waxed moustache standing out straight some three inches beyond his cheek bones, could the prime minister of England be impeached for the offence? No one versed in the English constitution will maintain the orthodoxy of such an absurd proceeding. But really no such flimsy pretension as *De gustibus*, etc., etc., would protect him against the jeers of little boys and ragged old women.

To return to our controversy between Scott, the first architect of his age, and Palmerston, well known as the Premier of England, counsellor to the queen, and the particular friend of one Louis Napoleon, the "Empereur" of the French people. It appears, from two late numbers of the London Builder, that two committees, interested positively and negatively in the execution of a certain design, prepared by Mr. Scott for the new foreign office and the India house, have waited upon his lordship to urge their respective reasons why the said design should or should not be executed, which reasons, *pro* and *con*, at that time urged, determined his lordship to adhere to a preconceived resolution that it should not be executed. The noble lord disliked Gothic architecture; he thought it unfit for the purposes of a Foreign Office. He thinks Gothic architecture by no means "an English style," and gives as his reason the fact that modern British architects have erected in London and elsewhere, a long list of renaissance buildings, which, although not indigenous, have become the constructed exponents of English architectural expression and taste. He desires above all things, that the building should be supplied with shutters to exclude the sun, which he fears cannot be done in the Gothic style. Another great stumbling block with his lordship, is the enormous expense which would be incurred. It is true, upon a careful examination of different plans in different styles, that the Gothic designs have not been found in any respect wanting, but the premier has no faith in those estimates; he knows but one fact, and that is what Count Walewsky told him, that the foreign offices in Paris cost but £800,000 English money, which is much cheaper than anything of similar magnitude done in England; *ergo*, French architecture is decidedly cheapest. We think it unfair in the noble lord to overlook the difference in the price of labor between Paris and London, and we cannot help thinking that Great Britain can still afford to pay the price of a work of art in spite of the heavy expenses of the late war, undertaken for the sole benefit of her august ally, the particular friend of the premier, under whose administration she happened to "drift" into the said war, without the necessity of copying the weak architecture of the ally aforesaid, with a view to economy!

If England could ever boast of an architecture of her own worthy of that name, it is that peculiar and characteristic phase of Gothic architecture which is known as English Gothic. We do not admire all stages of it, nor do we withhold our admiration from the contemporary continental monuments; nor, indeed, do we subscribe to the exploded conceit of Englishmen, that Gothic architecture originated in England; but we do maintain that English Gothic, particularly the early English, as a national expression of the style prevailing through civilized Europe, possesses artistic beauties unequalled elsewhere. But the premier dislikes Gothic architecture, and therefore, as a logician who is sensible of the fallacies embodied in his arguments, he resorts to the hackneyed hobby of weak amateurs, "*De gustibus non est disputandum*."

In fact, if the noble lord followed his inclinations, he would

supersede Mr. Scott by some other architect (an arrangement, by the way, exceedingly pleasing to one of the aforesaid deputations, consisting mostly of architects), were it not for the disagreeable necessity of compensating Mr. Scott in full, he having been regularly employed by the Commissioners of Works. Another point of political economy (?) In the dilemma he resolves to retain the architect, but intends to compel him to design a renaissance façade to his ground plan, or what we think equivalent to it, to force him to resign. He thinks the foundations can be built as soon as the ground plan is settled upon, and that those foundations will answer for any new design, no matter what style may be finally determined upon. The prime minister feels acutely the pain which such a proceeding must give to Mr. Scott, who has devoted himself to the subject with much earnestness and ability, but *his* feelings are not to be taken into consideration when a matter of so great interest is at stake, which, according to the premier, would inevitably suffer by erecting so "ugly a pile" (we quote the premier), as designed by Mr. Scott. The noble lord wants a building which shall be "light and airy, pleasant without and gay within," something in the Italian style and not Gothic. He is a warm admirer of the public buildings of Paris, and would like to see them imitated, and he tells the architects so, and then dismisses them after having treated them with English bluntness and confidence—in this respect, not at all imitating his French models. He concludes by saying, that in or out of office, he should ever oppose the erection of a Gothic building.

To thoroughly understand what all this is about, and to appreciate the position of the different contending parties, it becomes necessary to go back somewhat in the history of architecture, which we propose to do as briefly as possible, and then define the position of architects and amateurs on the subject of styles.

From the time of the erection of the Tower of Babel, as near as we can approach the period with the assistance of such historical accounts as are at our command, up to the beginning of the fourteenth century, architecture has existed as a living and progressive art. This means that century after century new constructions have been invented, new forms to clothe them in, and new expressions for the changing and increasing ideas of humanity. The monuments of those periods constitute a historical index of the respective ages they belong to. Isolated, they indicate the degree of mechanical and artistic development of the Art of their time, and collectively, they form an uninterrupted chain of constant improvements, a book of stone, complete and whole, a book destined to serve mankind as an instructor until new demands call forth new constructions, new forms combined with artistic expressions, superior, or at least equal, to those revealed by former productions. After the lapse of one or two centuries (differing in different countries), during which time architecture lingered in a state of inactivity, and even degenerated, mankind again turned its active attention to the art. Society had changed her religions, political and social opinions and institutions; she demanded a similar change in her architecture. Unfortunately, however, these changes were accompanied with violent revulsions, revulsions which, so far from fostering Art and artists, had done much to destroy every vestige of both. Architects had to be created, and men devoting themselves to the profession naturally looked to the past for a starting-point to their studies. Now, we have all seen children's schoolbooks. The first pages are well-thumbed, and the last almost untouched. Even so was it with the archi-

tects of the renaissance. They had to study architecture anew, and they stopped at their early lessons, both from laziness and from inability to master the intricacies of mediæval architecture. This may seem a hard accusation, and would inevitably be pronounced so by the 230 votaries of Palladio in London, were we not prepared to advance a most incontrovertible proof of our assertion. So entirely lost were architects to all feeling of Art, that for two hundred years they supposed it to be a science based upon certain rules of proportion which they endeavored to imitate. For this purpose they instituted measurements of all the accessible works of Grecian Art, and in their designs they scrupulously imitated those supposed invariable proportions, without regard to the magnitude of their buildings, their purpose, their position, or their materials. Mediæval Art stood before their eyes a perfect enigma, the solution of which, from its intricacy, was thought impossible, and pronounced to be lost with other secrets only known to the freemasons in the time of their highest prosperity. It became convenient to condemn the architecture of the middle ages as Gothic and barbarous, a fiat which found ready sympathy with a people who connected with Gothic architecture distasteful reminiscences of religious zeal and tyranny, of monkish fanaticism and feudal illiberality, of castles and strongholds, the seats of oppression and the dungeons of their progenitors. There existed, indeed, a few inquiring minds who, on the same erroneous principle that architecture was a mere science, thought by diligent study and extensive research, to have discovered the long lost key to the system of construction of the Gothic cathedrals; but their rule of the square, the circle and the triangle, together with their mystic numbers, formed a far too formidable study to be attractive to the practising architect.

In this manner men labored for nearly three centuries on what they called a revival of classic architecture, and a sorry revival it proves to be. The dead body was exhumed indeed, and set upon its tottering legs, and propped up and covered up with all kinds of fantastic toggery; but when you approach it you find it at best but a poor skeleton—a mummy dried into pigmy proportions—a counterfeit body without a soul. Extended examinations of antique architecture instituted near to or during the early part of the present century have clearly proved that architectural art, like other art, always has been and ever must be a free and untrammelled production of genius, emanating from the heart as much as from the head, subject to so many conditions that no definite and detailed rules can be assumed beyond the laws of nature and the proper appreciation of her beauties. It has been conceded on all hands that the study of architecture and her monuments must be confined to principles, and at best but cautiously extended into matter; that neither temples nor cathedrals can form perfect models for our parish churches, although the latter be more akin to our religion than the former, nor can we live in castles any more than we can live in huts. Thorough architects have based upon this wise conclusion to commence their progress where their predecessors have left off. Scott belongs to that class, and although the efforts of one man in an enterprise of this magnitude cannot be expected to accomplish much, he must be admitted to have done as much at least, if not more, than any other contemporary, in the right direction. It is to be regretted that there are but few men in existence who are bold enough to support him, and at the same time able to carry into action the result of their studies. They are besides widely separated, and too actively engaged in the pursuit of their profession to

form a school for combined action. The host of worshippers of Palladio, on the other hand, is hopelessly great. Every boy who has mastered the five orders as taught by Nicholson, every amateur who understands the trick of dexterously smuggling a closet opposite to an entrance door, so that doors may be symmetrical, every builder who is too old or too lazy to shove the jackplane, every idler who follows architecture as a genteel profession, every student who prefers to turn an honest penny by the practice of Greek architecture, rather than lose much more valuable time in the study of mediæval art, swells the ranks of renaissance architects.

This is the material which, with few isolated exceptions such as Barry, Owen Jones, and probably a few others, constitute the 230 who sent a deputation to Lord Palmerston to disinterestedly request the decapitation of Mr. Scott; who are bold enough to sneer at Gothic architecture, which they do not understand, and mean enough to injure a fellow artist whom they profess to regard very highly. As to Palmerston himself, we must do him the justice to say that we think him sincere in his opinions, and desirous to do what *he* thinks best. It cannot be reasonably expected that a prime minister should be an architect, nor even an amateur in architecture. Palmerston has succeeded wonderfully as a popular man, without ever having done much for the people, and why? simply because he shares the weaknesses and the failings of the majority; he loves their architecture, he admires the modern iniquities of London, the grand flummery of modern Paris: he wants the foreign offices "light and airy, handsome without and gay within" because that is the expression of his amiable temperament with which he has so long cajoled the public. But ought not the noble lord to leave these matters to Mr. Scott, rather than dictate in the premises, when he knows, or ought to know, that Mr. Scott is by far the most competent to understand the essential architectural expression of a British government office? Why did not the deputation of architects point out to his lordship his probable deficiencies, when they knew that he proposed to Lord Elcho to have a foundation built and then to alter the façade, thinking that the same foundation would answer as well for what he calls an Italian exterior as for Gothic—albeit Scott's exterior is Italian-Gothic. Let us ask the noble lord why those buildings should be light and airy in expression. Is it to convey to foreign ministers a notion of the British constitution? Is the British constitution light and airy? Is British diplomacy light and airy? Are the English people light and airy? Are London fogs light and airy? Or, is it Queen Victoria (God bless her) that is light and airy? No! light and airy is applicable to Paris, to her habits, her costumes, her statesmen, her liberties, and to her empress, if you please. "Handsome without and gay within," may be justly said of the noble lord himself, but we should not dare to stigmatize even him as light and airy. The fact is that the premiums for the designs have been awarded in the inverted ratio of their merit, as is common with official action. Scott's is decidedly the best, while the first premiated design is by far the poorest. To leave style out of consideration, it cannot compare with the second premiated design by Barry, and is far behind the third. The administration which finally employed Mr. Scott, and a respectable minority in the House of which Lord Elcho is the leader, are fully aware of the fact. They have made an effort to convince the premier of his error, and to petition in behalf of this threatened artist; but Palmerston is inexorable. We suggest as the only remedy that Mr. Scott be honorably discharged,

and not forced to design against his best judgment. If this involves the disagreeable necessity of paying him in full for the noble services he would have rendered had he been permitted to do so, it would not constitute the first expense Palmerston has drifted into without benefiting his country. We have heard much of the ignorance and tyranny of American building committees, and have ever been disposed to battle against them with all the satire at our command. We shall henceforth approach building committees with a high degree of respect, for we must confess that in our long experience we have met with nothing equal to the imbecility, and unscrupulous and concealed tyranny of Lord Palmerston over the first architect of his country.

Foreign Correspondence, Items, etc.

ENGLAND.—The Institute of Artists, in London, propose to have a portrait painted by subscription, of its president, Earl de Grey: the question naturally suggests itself, is Earl de Grey an architect?—A report by a committee of Council on Education has been made to Parliament, relating to the metropolitan scientific institutions, the aid afforded to schools of art, science, navigation, etc., the direction of a training school for art-teachers, the Kensington museum, and a circulating art-library. A summary of the report states that the number of visitors to the various museums and collections in London, Edinburgh, and Dublin, during the past year amounts in the aggregate to 875,898, showing an increase of 117,923 on the previous year. The returns from all the art-schools give a total number of 79,473 persons learning to draw, being an increase of 83 per cent. on those of 1857. The quality of instruction was never so high as at present, while the cost of it to the state, for each person undergoing instruction, is diminishing every year. Before 1851 this was as high as £3 2s. 4d. each person; in 1857, it was 13s. 1½d.; and in 1858 it had decreased to 10s. 1½d.—The exhibition of the Royal Academy produced this year £8,400, upward of \$40,000. Fourteen hundred works of Art were contributed to it.—Water in London seems to be regarded with almost as much reverence as in the East. In the Orient scarcity leads people to prize water, and to consider him a public benefactor who erects a fountain for public use. A wealthy and pious Mussulman of Damascus could imagine no better outlet for his beneficence than to provide water for travellers on a certain plain on which there were no streams or fountains. He accordingly caused wells to be dug so that they might be filled at the rainy season, and serve as reservoirs during the dry season. And furthermore, in order to keep his reservoirs supplied in case they should become exhausted, he endowed them by will with a sum ample enough to meet the expense of a transportation of water to the reservoirs, until they should be again filled naturally by the regular rains. That was a most Christian Mussulman! In England we find fountains constructed at various points, in London and throughout the country, in commemoration of individuals, who seem to deserve these watery, but not the less substantial honors. At Stratford a drinking-fountain as a memorial of the late Samuel Gurney has been erected. At Worcester another one, offered to the city by a Mr. Walker Renick. In Banbury the Board of Health and the Temperance Society have put one up "provided with metal cups, for the use of bipeds, and a cistern beneath for the benefit of the canine species." In Bristol there is one affixed to the outside of a